
Walt Stanchfield 11

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

“Those Who Cannot Begin Do Not Finish”

by Walt Stanchfield

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Robert Henri: The Art Spirit

In searching the model's pose for a good first impression that says, "This is what the model is doing, or thinking", look not for the elements that make up the figure (anatomical parts), but rather look for the elements that make up the pose. They will vary with the gesture, but usually will feature something like:

1. **Weight distribution.** How the figure balances itself because of what it is doing.
2. **Thrust.** Body language usually requires a hip to be thrust out, a shoulder up, knees apart, or an arm out (as in throwing something or pointing), etc.
3. **Angles.** Straight up and down figures are generally stiff and static. Angles will add life and a feeling of movement.
4. **Tension.** Whenever one member of the body moves there is the set up between it and its counterpart. You can capture an effective by working one elbow against the other elbow; one knee against the other. Likewise the feet, hands, and the shoulders. Never draw one appendage without planning a counter move with its opposite never.
5. **Straight against curve.** All work and no play makes a long and dreary day - or something like that. All curves and no straights makes a dreary drawing. Straights and curves tie in perfectly with one of animation's key tools, "squash and stretch". Straights and curves used indiscriminately is but trickery, but when used logically they can emphasize and clarify the gesture.
6. **Extremes of the pose.** Extremes in animation usually mean the farthest extension of some pose or the drawing just prior to a change of direction. A single drawing also has extremes, which, in a "flash", explains what is happening in the pose. Those extremes are vital to such an explanation. To the degree they are missing or diluted, the drawing will deteriorate from "expressive" to "bland" to "confusing" to downright "boring". Silhouette almost explains "extreme", but not if it is thought of as a tracing of the outside of the figure. Forces are at play in a gesture and it is force and thrust and tension that generates an extreme.

A perceptive overall distribution of all these elements concentrates the viewers attention on the vital aspects of the gesture. To gloss over them in a muddled and nebulous way is to cheat the viewer out of a clear look at what you are trying to "say".

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Here is another quote from “Art Spirit”. (I replaced the words portrait and painting with the word drawing.)

“An interest in the subject; something you want to say definitely about the subject; this is the first condition of a drawing. The processes of drawing spring from this interest, this definite thing to be said. Completion does not depend on material representation. The work is done when that special thing has been said. The artist starts with an opinion (first impression), he organizes the materials (the elements I spoke of above), from which and with which he draws, to the expression of the opinion (first impression). The things have no longer their dead meaning but have become living parts of a coordination. To start with a deep impression, the best, the most interesting, the deepest you can have of the model; to preserve this vision throughout the work; to see nothing else; to admit of no digression from it every element in the picture will be constructive, constructive of an idea, expressive of an emotion. Every factor in the drawing will have beauty because in its place in the organization, it is doing its living part. It is only through a sense of the right relation of things that freedom can be obtained.”

An actor may have a pleasant voice, perfect diction, proper emphasis, all the qualities necessary to make a good performer, but if his accompanying body language is unclear, the audience is left in a “no man’s land”, and up goes the sign, “TILT”. The audience is left with some undecipherable bits of information. Likewise the artist. There may be an appealing technique, but if the message is garbled, the purpose of the drawing is lost.

The accompanying drawings all contain corrections that illustrate the above mentioned, all important elements. The correction (suggestions) were not done to teach anyone “how to draw”, but rather how to see those elements and to make them the basis for all drawings. They are easy to spot if you look for them when making your first impression. If you start your drawing without locating them - you may find yourself drawing without a purpose or your purpose may evolve into a desperate search to find out what went wrong with your drawing.

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